

Assemblyman  
**PAUL KORETZ**  
 Forty-second Assembly District

*proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks*



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## **California Enacts Major Transgender Protections** *Koretz Bill First in the Nation to Address Health Care Discrimination*

(West Hollywood) – California became the first state in the nation to ban denials of insurance coverage based solely on a person's transgender status when Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed legislation today authored by Assemblymember Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood). AB 1586 adds gender and gender identity to existing anti-discrimination provisions in California laws regulating insurance companies and health care service plans. The new law will take effect January 1, 2006 and prohibits insurers and health plans from discriminating on the basis of gender identity in contracts and policies or in the provision of benefits or coverage.

“Transgender people are part of our human family and they deserve equal access to health coverage and treatments available to everyone else. AB 1586 goes a long way toward ending the indignities that transgender men and women face when trying to access healthcare. This is a matter of human compassion and basic fairness,” said Assemblyman Koretz.

While attending a town hall meeting on transgender health care issues in Los Angeles last February, Koretz announced he would introduce legislation to somehow deal with the issue. “After hearing such compelling testimony I decided right then and there to introduce legislation outlawing the denial of health insurance based solely on ignorance, prejudice, and bureaucratic insensitivity,” said Koretz.

Despite existing statutes prohibiting discrimination based on sex, many people in California experience discrimination by insurance companies and health plans on the basis of gender, particularly members of California's transgender community. Some are denied the ability to purchase insurance or are denied coverage for medically necessary procedures simply because they are transgender. For example, if a plan covers gynecological care for women then the same care should be available to a female-to-male transgender person whose legal gender is male, but may still have need for coverage or care usually provided only to women.

Geoff Kors is Executive Director of Equality California, a statewide organization advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights and the sponsor of AB 1586. “This is the first time a state has enacted legislation to ban transgender discrimination in the provision of health insurance coverage and it is long overdue. We are gratified by the support given to this important issue by the Legislature and the Governor,” said Kors.

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A 2003 report published by the Transgender Law Center and the National Center for Lesbian Rights surveyed people who participate in transgender community programs or services in San Francisco. The survey found that over 30% of respondents reported they had been discriminated against while trying to access health care. Only 15% reported surgical alteration of any type while about 70% had taken steps to change documents such as driver's licenses or social security records to reflect their gender identity. Advocates say the report underscores the need for legislation like the Koretz bill here in California and nationally.

"AB 1586 is a powerful new tool for transgender people and their families who want to be able to utilize their health insurance free of discriminatory restrictions. Its passage clarifies the duty that insurers have to provide access to coverage and services and encourages community members to work with attorneys, advocates and state regulators to make social change one policy at a time," said Christopher Daley, Director of the Transgender Law Center.

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Website of Assemblymember Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood)

[www.PaulKoretz.com](http://www.PaulKoretz.com)

Website of Equality California

[www.EQCA.org](http://www.EQCA.org)

Website of the Transgender Law Center

[www.TransgenderLawCenter.org](http://www.TransgenderLawCenter.org)